The Pattern of Administrative Reforms in the Closing Years of Dutch Rule in Indonesia
Author(s): Harry J. Benda
Source: *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Aug., 1966), pp. 589-605
Published by: Association for Asian Studies
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2051493
Accessed: 14/08/2013 02:56

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Association for Asian Studies is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Asian Studies.*

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

The Pattern of Administrative Reforms in the Closing Years of Dutch Rule in Indonesia

HARRY J. BENDA

THE history of Indonesia in the last two or three decades of Dutch colonial rule still has to be written, and it can only be written when the abundant archival materials for this period, both in Indonesia and in the Netherlands, come to be opened up for scholarly investigation.[1] Scholars who, since the Second World War, have turned their attention to modern Indonesian history have tended to focus on the development of Indonesian nationalism, and for understandable reasons. The Indonesian Revolution, crowned by the attainment of Indonesian independence in 1949, rendered an understanding of the Indonesian nationalist movement in colonial times imperative not only to Indonesian historians attempting to come to grips with their country's recent past but also to an ever-increasing number of foreign students. Welcome as this ongoing re-examination of Indonesian nationalism is, it, too, must remain incomplete until documentary evidence, whether archival or (auto)-biographical, can substantially enrich it.

There is, furthermore, another reason why most of these recent attempts must be viewed with a modicum of caution: they are almost invariably cast in a teleological frame of reference which reflects, so to speak, the ultimate victory of Indonesian nationalism back upon its history in the colonial era. Implicitly or explicitly, this approach not only endows the nationalist movement (or movements, rather) with a self-sustaining momentum of virtually uninterrupted growth and strength, it also implies that late colonial history revolved around the issue of nationalism.[2] Both assumptions, it would appear on closer scrutiny, are very likely erroneous and thus tend to distort the historical record, imperfectly as it is so far known to us.

This article will not directly address itself to either of these two problems. A reassessment of Indonesian nationalism in the late colonial era, in particular, is reserved for a subsequent essay. But the relative insignificance of nationalism as an issue in the eyes of the colonial and home governments (not necessarily mirrored in the often paranoid phobia with which most Europeans and Eurasians in the Indies viewed "the native movement") deserves brief comment for our present purposes.

Harry J. Benda is Professor of History at Yale University.

[1] A new series of official documents is in the process of publication in the Netherlands, providing excellent materials for future research. The first volume is S. L. van der Wal (ed.), *Het onderwijsbeleid in Nederlandsch-Indië 1900–1940: Een bronnenpublikatie—Education Policy in the Netherlands-Indies 1900–1940 (with a Preface, Introduction and Survey of the Documents in English)* (Groningen, 1963). Attention should also be drawn to a three-volume publication of the official recommendations to both the colonial and home governments by the famous Arabist, one-time Adviser on Native and Arabian Affairs, and Professor of Arabic and Islamic Institutions at Leiden University, C. Snouck Hurgronje; two volumes have so far appeared. E. Gobée and C. Adriaanse (eds.), *Ambtelijke adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje* (The Hague, 1957, 1959).

[2] Cf. Harry J. Benda, "Decolonization in Indonesia: The Problem of Continuity and Change," *American Historical Review*, LXX (1965), 1058–73.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

It is true, of course, that Dutch colonial officialdom was forced to take cognizance of Indonesian nationalism. It is equally true that Dutch policy vis-à-vis Indonesian nationalism rested, to a far from insignificant extent, on repression, especially so after the Communist-led uprisings of the mid-nineteen twenties. Prominent Indonesian leaders, Communist and non-Communist alike, were either banished from the colony or individually interned in various parts of the archipelago, while the greater number of lesser spokesmen found their way into the detainment camp at Boven Digul in New Guinea. The numbers so exiled were, however, relatively small; the Digul internees, counting some 1,300 in the mid-nineteen twenties, in 1935 barely totalled four hundred—surely a surprisingly low count in a total population exceeding sixty-five millions.[3]

The Dutch Indies may, then, well have been a police state,[4] and constant repression, petty and irksome surveillance of all manifestation—real or presumed—of anti-government sentiment are matters of the record. Yet this was, at most, only the harsh edge of a colonial system that could easily control what to all intents and purposes was a numerically feeble opposition. Indeed, it was not the repressive rigor so much as the studied, condescending indifference to Indonesian nationalism, the stubborn refusal to take it seriously—in part at least because of its weakness—that may well have inflicted the most damaging psychological wounds to the pride of the movement's leadership.[5] But this attitude, in turn, cannot have resulted primarily from myopia so much as from the unshakable belief in Dutch superiority, from an unperturbed certitude in the rightness—and inevitable gradualness—of the Dutch civilizing mission in Indonesia.[6] The humiliating record of even moderate petitions haughtily refused, of increasingly insistent nationalist demands laughed out of court by a Dutch government already forced into exile by the German invasion and at a time when the war visibly threatened the colony, the miniscule gestures made on the eve of the impending loss of the colony—they all surely testify to the firm Dutch belief that Indonesian nationalism simply did not matter or warrant serious official concern.[7]

If it is hard to imagine a governor-general blithely asserting, in 1936, the need for

[3] These figures are taken from J. Th. Petrus Blumberger, *De communistische beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Haarlem, 2nd rev. ed., 1935), 118–19.

[4] The Batavia daily *De Java Bode* stated on December 8, 1937, that "the Indies have become a state living under a police regime." Quoted in G.-H. Bousquet, *A French View of the Netherlands-Indies* (tr. by Philip E. Lilienthal; New York, 1940), 34n.

[5] For a thoughtful post-war Dutch discussion, see P. J. A. Idenburg, "Het Nederlandse antwoord op het Indonesisch nationalisme," in H. Baudet and I. J. Brugmans (eds.), *Balans van het Beleid: Terugblik op de laatste halve eeuw van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Assen, 1961), 121–51.

[6] Cf. the symptomatic title, *Mission Interrupted* (Amsterdam, 1945), of an abbreviated English translation of a Dutch symposium on the Netherlands Indies, W. H. van Helsdingen and H. Hoogenberk (eds.), *Daar wèrd wat groots verricht . . . : Nederlandsch-Indië in de XXe eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1941). The book, which contains many authoritative contributions by leading specialists, is pervaded by the spirit paraphrased in the text. The same may be said of most of *Balans van Beleid* (see Note 5, above), and it is truer still of the remarkable collection of essays included in a volume dedicated to the glory of the *Binnenlands Bestuur* (Department of Interior Administration), *Gedenkboek van de Vereniging van Ambtenaren bij het Binnenlands Bestuur in Nederlands-Indië* (Utrecht, 1956). (Future references will read *Gedenkboek*).

[7] The record is carefully chronicled in George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, 1952), Ch. III. For an insightful reminiscence by an Indonesian, see S. H. Tajibnapis, "De laatste tien jaren voor de Japansche bezetting," *De Brug/Djambatan*, I, 1 (April, 1946), 10–14 and I, 2 (May, 1946), 14–16. Cf. also J. de Kadt, *De Indonesische tragedie: het treurspel der gemiste kansen* (Amsterdam, 1949).

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

another three hundred years of colonial rule anywhere else in Southeast Asia (with the probable exception of French Indo-China), the assertion was nonetheless widely accepted as self-evident;[8] nor can we be sure that, without the Japanese cataclysm, Dutch colonialism would or could have been forced into far-reaching concessions, let alone seriously challenged, by Indonesian nationalism at an early date. This, for sure, is pure speculation, as is the related question of whether the prevalence of such an attitude among officials in the colony and in the metropolis may not have proved to be the major stumbling block to a timely Dutch reorientation to the new Indonesian reality of the immediate postwar years and, even beyond them, to the baleful colonial legacy of the New Guinea (Irian Barat) dispute.[9]

What does concern us in this essay is that the absence of a constant preoccupation with the issue of nationalism, justified or not as it may have been, should not be misread as the absence of a Dutch colonial policy proper in the years under investigation. Such a policy did exist and it occupied, indeed it almost preempted, most official attention to the detriment of political questions. In later colonial times the problem of nationalism (as of other, notably religious, manifestations of antigovernmental movements) had been relegated to the police, leaving the administrators to devote their expert training and tireless energies to matters of administration. Tautological as this may sound, it points up the basic—though often neglected—fact that colonial governments are almost without exception *Beamtenstaaten,* apolitical, administrative polities par excellence. The maintenance of peace and order being the *summum bonum* of what, in Frederick Lasalle's contemptuous phrase, could be called a nightwatchman state, colonial policy is above all an instrument for the implementation, not of competing social demands but of "sound administration" per se.[10] That the guardians of the Dutch colonial polity had to abide by the general rules of capitalist exploitation is as undeniable as were their frequent endeavors to place themselves, in good Platonic style, above the persistent economic and political demands of mammon's spokesmen in the colony no less than in the metropolitan parliament.

The last four decades of Dutch rule in Indonesia are seemingly dominated by the constant theme of reform. They commenced in and during the first two decades remained virtually limited to Java, extending to the other islands thereafter. But continuity is more apparent than real, tending to mask a rather profound hiatus that occurred halfway along the road. To understand this disruption it will be necessary to see reforms in the broader perspective of twentieth century colonial history.

Though the colony had for decades been a *Beamtenstaat,* inroads into its pristine existence had occurred ever since the turn of the twentieth century under the aegis

[8] Governor-General B. C. de Jonge (1931–1936), in an interview granted the North Sumatran daily *Deli Courant,* said *i.a.* ". . . I am always being asked in connection with . . . [our] policy of autonomy: when? Now I believe that since we have worked in the Indies for some 300 years, another 300 will have to be added before they may perhaps be ready for some kind of autonomy." Cited in *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* (The Hague), XXV (1936), 338.

[9] Cf. F. J. M. Duynstee, *Nieuw-Guinea als schakel tussen Nederland en Indonesië* (Amsterdam, 1961).

[10] A prominent Dutch journalist in colonial Indonesia accurately described the apolitical nature of the colonial polity when he called it a ". . . structure in which the problem of power plays no part, [and] in which the play of political forces cannot ever lead to a decisive influence on the development of the conduct of governmental [policy]." J. H. Ritman, "Eenige aanteekeningen over politeke partijen in Indië," *Koloniale Studiën* (Batavia), XXI (1937), 339.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

of the so-called Ethical Policy first enunciated in Queen Wilhelmina's speech from the throne in 1901.[11] This new colonial policy, with its enthusiastic emphasis on rapid modernization of colonial, but especially indigenous, society, had brought forth a reformist zeal all too often directed against some of the most hallowed institutions of the administrative *ancien régime*. Political pressures for change from an increasingly Liberal parliament were channeled through reformist-minded colonial ministers and their appointees, the governors-general. The epitomes of the Dutch *Beamtenstaat,* the corps of the *Binnenlands Bestuur* (Interior Administration Department, usually abbreviated as B. B.), hitherto the well-nigh all-powerful "demi-gods" of the colonial realm,[12] were forced to yield, or worse still, saw themselves bypassed by hosts of new officials manning the mushrooming specialized technical and welfare agencies.[13] At the same time, steps were taken to endow some segments of the population with at least the rudiments of self-governing instrumentalities. The excitements of the First World War led to ever greater experimentation, crowned by the establishment of a quasi-representative assembly (the *Volksraad,* or People's Council) in 1918, and by the appointment of a Revision Commission (*Herzieningscommissie*) which, two years later, produced a voluminous blueprint for an increasingly liberalized colonial relationship.

The newly emerging pattern of these administrative as well as quasi-political reforms had by no means become rooted and established when the colony entered an era of more or less profound shocks. To begin with, political unrest had gained visible momentum with the rise of the first (and indeed also the last) mass movement in colonial Indonesia, the *Sarekat Islam,* whose legators, the fledgling Indonesian Communist Party, fanned the by then waning waves of popular unrest into suicidal uprisings in 1926–27.[14] To the "demi-gods," it was all too obvious that the whirlwind which outsiders had created had at long last yielded—as the B. B. had expectantly feared—its bitter harvest.[15] These turbulent events before long brought the *Beamtenstaat* back into the good graces of *colons* and increasingly conservative

[11] For the complete text of the speech from the throne, see E. van Raalte (ed. & comp.), *Troonredes, Openingsredes, Inhuldigingsredes 1814–1963* (The Hague, 1964), 193–94. The relevant passage reads as follows: "As a Christian Power, the Netherlands are duty-bound better to order the legal position of the native Christians in the Indian Archipelago, to lend firmer support to the Christian mission, and to permeate the entire governmental system by the realization that the Netherlands has to fulfill a moral obligation towards the population of these areas." (p. 94).

[12] "Demi-gods of the centralized regime" is how a Dutch commentator referred to the B.B. officials as late as 1936. See J. J. van Bolhuis, "Indië en de Nederlandische Volksvertegenwoordiging," *De Indische Gids* (Amsterdam), 58 (1936), 731.

[13] The problems created by the rise of the technical services are briefly discussed by W. H. van Helsdingen, "Het centraal en regionaal bewind," in *Daar wèrd wat groots verricht,* 475–76, and Ph. Coolhaas, "Ontstaan en groei," in *Gedenkboek,* 64. A far more profound change, also under the aegis of modernization, had been legal reform, which sought to separate judicial from administrative functions. The establishment of a judicature constituted an important diminution of the B.B. corps' authority (see Coolhaas, *ibid.,* 54 and 64). For a brief discussion, see H. A. Idema, "De rechtspraak," in *Daar wèrd wat groots verricht,* 448 ff.

[14] These events are carefully traced in Robert Van Niel, *The Development of the Indonesian Elite* (The Hague and Bandung, 1960), 207–42.

[15] The events of the mid-1920's gave rise to a flood of critical, often vindictive, literature, much of it seeking a causal connection between the uprisings and liberal reforms. One typical example is M. W. F. Treub's *Het gist in Indië* (Haarlem, 1927); its author was chairman of the "Ondernemersraad," the plantation owners' council in the Netherlands. The most important work in this flood of criticism was that by Dr. H. Colijn, later premier and minister of colonies, *Koloniale vraagstukken van heden en morgen* (Amsterdam, 1928).

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

home governments alike. Slowly, the reformist tide started to recede, to receive further blows when the world depression of the nineteen thirties sharply reduced the surpluses that had been the fiscal cornerstone of liberal experimentation.[16] *"Rust en orde"* (tranquillity and order), together with financial sobriety, thus became once again the watchwords of colonial rule, as the Netherlands entered what turned out to be its last decade in the Indian archipelago. Officialdom reinstated to its pre-eminence confronted the task of disentangling, if not dismantling, the web of reforms bequeathed to it by two decades of exuberance, while constructing a new and presumed safer edifice of its own, "counter-reformist," design.

We should, however, beware of seeing the "demi-gods" as the real, or the only, devils in the drama of colonial Indonesian history. Not only is their reluctance to see the weakening if the not the presumed dismemberment of the *Beamtenstaat* understandable in terms of normal human reactions,[17] their criticisms of what was being attempted in the first two decades of this century was as often as not justified or at least justifiable. It could be argued that under their aegis the evolution of Indonesian society had been artificially retarded; but it must be admitted that the plethora of reforms introduced under pressures largely generated in distant Holland suddenly pushed that evolution ahead with little regard for Indonesian social reality. In particular, the hasty introduction of Western-style institutions into Asian communities was (and remains), at best, problematical. The virtual repetition of the decentralization and recentralization drama thirty years later, in the context of an independent Indonesia, would seem to lend paradoxical weight to the erstwhile Dutch defenders of the administrative status quo.

The reformist tide that was to sweep over the Netherlands Indies after the turn of the twentieth century in large part originated in fairly widespread dissatisfaction with the *Beamtenstaat,* which in many quarters was by then considered an outdated encumbrance. Quite apart from the fact that Indonesian society itself had started to stir and show signs of political vigor, a widening rift between administrators and European *colons*—generic to most modern colonies—had generated pressures for modernization and change. Once the dams were breached, nothing seemed to be sacred, purely administrative reforms being implemented side by side with potentially more far-reaching political, or quasi-political, ones;[18] their constant overlapping and, more important, the question of the priorities to be accorded either remained characteristic features of the first two decades.[19]

Administrative reform intersected with, and was often subsumed under, the gen-

[16] For a brief discussion of the impact of the depression on the Indonesian economy, see M. A. Idema, "Impulsen tot Indië's ontwikkeling," in *Daar wèrd wat groots verricht,* 433–35. Cf. also G. Gonggrijp, *Schets ener eonomische geschiedenis van Indonesië* (Haarlem, 4th impr., 1957), Ch. VIII, esp. 180 ff.

[17] B. B. opposition to reforms is specifically acknowledged by van Helsdingen, *loc. cit.,* 461, and by R. K. A. Bertsch, "Het Binnenlandsch Bestuur," in *Daar wèrd wat groots verricht,* 473–74. See also R. A. A. Wiranatakoesoema, "De Regentschapsraad," in F. W. M. Kerchman (ed.), *25 Jaren Decentralisatie in Nederlandsch-Indië, 1905–1930* (Semarang, n.d., *ca.* 1931), 191–92, and W. C. Koenders, "Het B. B. en de Indische maatschappij," in *Gedenkboek,* 284.

[18] "From the beginning," wrote an astute British observer, "administrative and political reforms have been closely intertwined." John S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study in Plural Economy* (Cambridge, 1944), 264.

[19] A. Jansen, "Voortzetting van de bestuurshervorming," *Koloniale Studiën,* XX (1936), 88–108; reprinted also in *Koloniaal Tijdschrift,* XXV (1936), 603–22. This is one of the most concise discussions of the reforms.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

eral label of decentralization, a word fraught with several distinct meanings. It could imply greater "Indian" autonomy from The Hague,[20] but more frequently its prime purpose was to loosen the tight central control wielded by Batavia over life in the archipelago; in this latter sense, decentralization came to mean first, the creation of organs endowed with a measure of autonomy, and thus partly removed from administrative control and, second, the development of greater independence within the administrative system as such. This involved regional decentralization,[21] but more particularly the bestowing of greater responsibilities upon the native administrative corps—the so-called *Inlands Bestuur*—recruited from among the Javanese aristocracy. (This corps, in fact, derived from the precolonial royal administrative system, but it had gradually been converted into an hereditary, bureaucratic adjunct to the European B. B. of which it formed the lower echelon.[22])

The first of the decentralization laws was passed in 1903, when the Liberal Christian A. W. F. Idenburg was Colonial Minister. It established municipalities in Java (inaugurated in 1905), to be followed by a few others in the outer islands during the First World War. The tasks devolved on these bodies were, however, so narrowly circumscribed that contemporary opinion dubbed the half-hearted measure a *"bang wetje"*—a cautious little law.[23] The municipalities also provided for a limited measure of self-government for their European and Eurasian citizens; significantly, however, municipal councils at first exercised no jurisdiction over the urban indigenous populations living in city *kampongs* who remained under the central control of the B. B. In 1907–08 a beginning was also made in the direction of regional decentralization, when so-called *gewesten* (departments) were created, headed by Residents who, under this new dispensation, were to enjoy somewhat greater freedom of action from the center; at the same time, regional councils (*gewestelijke raden*) were established in these departments.

Regional decentralization, like so much else, received a major additional boost with the Decentralization Law of 1922—to take effect in 1925—which inter alia replaced the *gewesten,* to begin with, by the three Provinces of West, Central and East Java.[24] Like the municipalities, the new provinces were equipped with part-elected, part-appointed councils (*provinciale raden*), in both cases patently fashioned after Dutch models of local self-rule, which took the place of the poorly devised regional councils. Neither municipal nor provincial bodies were entirely free of administrative personnel, middle-rank B. B. officials at the outset acting as mayors

[20] This aspect of decentralization is not discussed in this paper. For a brief critical evaluation, especially also of the constitutional relationship reflected in the new basic law of 1925, see Furnivall, *op. cit.,* 277–80.

[21] Insofar as this also meant a measure of greater freedom of action for European civil servants outside the capital, decentralization in this limited sense of the word found ready approval among them. See Coolhaas, *loc. cit.,* 65.

[22] For an excellent discussion of the historical development of the regent's office, see B. Schrieke, "The Native Rulers," in *Indonesian Sociological Studies: Selected Writings of B. Schrieke,* Part One (The Hague/Bandung, 1955), 167–221.

[23] Cited in *Verslag van de Commissie tot bestudeering van staatsrechtelijke hervormingen* (Batavia, 1941–42, 2nd impr., New York, 1944), I, 134. Future references to this important publication, the official report on governmental reorganization published on the eve of the Japanese occupation, will be styled *Visman Report,* after the Commission's chairman, Dr. F. H. Visman, a member of the Council of the Indies.

[24] The decentralization law can be found in *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië,* 1922, Nr. 216; the ordinances establishing the new provinces and regencies appeared in *ibid.,* 1924, Nrs. 78 and 79.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

pro tem of municipalities and occupying important positions on the provincial councils. Unquestionably, though, municipalities, with their predominant European representation, soon came to exercise a measure of true self-government that rendered them increasingly efficient, self-reliant and impervious to administrative tutelage. It was not so in the provincial assemblies that had been arbitrarily carved out in accordance with broad territorial divisions devoid of intrinsic cohesion, and composed of a multi-racial membership; there, officialdom, for lack of a viable constituency, continued to play a more important role.[25] Nonetheless, the accommodation of officialdom to the quasi-democratic atmosphere and practices of conciliar bodies was always fraught with difficulties, for the membership (including inferior administrative officers) could and did exercise the right to speak to the "demi-gods" as equals.[26] This, of course, did not suffice to breathe real life into the provincial councils which might conceivably have withered on the vine but for their functioning as electoral colleges for the *Volksraad* at Batavia. In that central advisory tribunal, inaugurated amidst the exaggerated hopes engendered by the report of the Revision Commission of 1918, political decentralization had, as it were, found its supreme expression; and it was there, too, that the winds—and at the outset even the storms —of political life blew most forcefully, the more so since the liberally-minded government had at the outset appointed representatives from some of the most volatile groupings to this body.[27] The municipal and provincial councils—like the regency councils presently to be discussed—were, indeed, instituted to provide, ex post facto, a proper scaffolding for the hastily created *Volksraad;* they came to serve as electoral colleges for the Batavia assembly. But the history of the *Volksraad* belongs more properly to the political history of colonial Indonesia than to an analysis of administrative reforms.

We may now turn to the decentralization reforms aimed at the native administrative structure in Java. Where provinces were artificial creations derived from Dutch models, the units of indigenous authority, the so-called Regencies (*regentschappen*), being by and large based on administrative subdivisions of precolonial Java, at least enjoyed a measure of traditional, organic sanction in the eyes of the population.[28] For sure, the roots of that sanction lay in an autocratic past which, Dutch lipservice notwithstanding, had long since yielded to the eroding influences of direct colonial rule.[29] The twentieth century Regent might still enjoy some of the ascriptive prestige inherent in the delegation of royal charisma; but over the decades he had not only been turned into an adjunct of an intrinsically Western bureaucratic apparatus —i.a. exemplified by the paradox that hereditary succession, though formally introduced and recognized by the Dutch, had almost become the exception rather than the rule—but the actual functions of his office had irresistibly passed into the hands

[25] For a detailed account of regional representation, see H. J. Levelt, "Samenstelling van de raden der autonome ressorten," in *25 Jaren Decentralisatie,* 24–39. A summary of the situation in later years can be found in *Visman Report,* I, 138 ff.

[26] See Coolhaas, *loc. cit.,* 66–68; Bertsch, *loc. cit.,* 473–74, and Koenders, *loc. cit.,* 284.

[27] For a brief discussion, see Furnivall, *op. cit.,* 275–77. An important collection of essays on the *Volksraad* appeared in *Koloniale Studiën,* XXII (1938); that periodical devoted an entire issue (#3) to the chamber which was then celebrating its twentieth anniversary. A convenient survey of the *Volksraad* can be found in *Visman Report,* I, Ch. 4, Part 1.

[28] Cf. van Helsdingen, *loc. cit.,* 466.

[29] See Note 22, above.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

of his officially-styled "Elder Brother," the Dutch Assistant Resident. In fact, it was the lowest Dutch official, the *Controleur,* who had over the decades become the true "head" of the regency.[30] By the turn of the century, little was left of the hallowed principle of having "like rule over like"; at best, the Regent reigned while his Dutch superior ruled. The waning of native authority in Java was graphically paralleled by the decline of indirect rule in the Outer Islands, where centralization reduced the number of the so-called self-governing areas (*zelfbesturende landschappen*) from 340 to 273 between 1914 and 1930. In part this reduction was due to the merger of petty principalities, but in the main it resulted from their outright abolition and absorption into directly-ruled territories.[31]

Attempts to "do something" about the indigenous governmental elite in Java antedated the sweeping provisions of the Decentralization Law of 1922. In the early years of the Ethical era, the staunch but almost lone advocate of an associationist colonial policy, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, loudly advocated the rapid Westernization of this elite through Dutch higher education.[32] Radical as Snouck's advice was, once adopted it would have obviated the increasingly hollow dualism dear to Dutch administrative theory; at long last the Regent might have escaped from his anomolous position in an administrative practice that had, in fact, no proper place for cherished anachronisms. In the end, however, this would have meant the "Indonesianization" of the B. B. itself, as Snouck had quite clearly envisaged and argued for.[33] This, surely, was too much to ask and expect. Instead, the government decided to tinker. Between 1912 and 1918, an experimental policy, known under the promising name of *ontvoogding* (literally, "de-tutelization"), was introduced. A few Regents, presumably selected on the basis of their educational record and proven loyalty, were thus de-tutelized, others to follow suit later. But in the words of a careful Dutch student, *ontvoodging* "did not constitute a thought-out and complete system, but merely a faulty expression of a vague and general aiming at increased independence of the native administrative corps."[34] One of the first and most prominent beneficiaries of de-tutelization in fact in later years asserted that it had not affected his position at all.[35] If anything, the half-hearted attempt at partial devolution had led to a blurring of the lines of responsibility between B. B. and *Indands Bestuur,* and hence to confusion and even to incidental friction.

But where *ontvoogding* constituted an internal administrative reform, that envisaged under the Decentralization Law went beyond the administrative to the quasi-political realm. From being a mere territorial unit, the Regency was now to grow into an organic cell of limited self-government undergirding the new structure capped by the *Volksraad. Ontvoogding,* for all its nebulousness, had been a cautious, experimental attempt, theoretically at least depending on proven merit. Not

[30] Bertsch, *loc. cit.,* 474.

[31] Van Helsdingen, *loc. cit.,* 468–69. On the areas under indirect rule see also Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (New York, 1937), Ch. IX, and J. C. C. Haar, *De zelfbestuurspolitiek van de Korte Verklaringslandschappen in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Utrecht, 1939), Ch. IX.

[32] C. Snouck Hurgronje, "De inlandsche bestuursambtenaren, vooral op Java," in *Verspreide geschriften van C. Snouck Hurgronje* (Bonn and Leipzig, 1924), Vol. IV #2, 147–68. See also *Ambtelijke Adviezen van C. Snouck Hurgronje,* I, 538–74, for several incisive comments.

[33] See Harry J. Benda, "Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia," *The Journal of Modern History,* XXX (1958), 338–47.

[34] J. M. Pieters, *De zoogenaamde ontvoogding van het Inlandsch Bestuur* (Wegeningen, 1932), 131–32.

[35] *Herinneringen van Pangeran Aria Achmad Djajadiningrat* (Amsterdam and Batavia, 1936), 100.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

so the new decentralization which, superseding a barely-commenced and selective de-tutelization, decreed all Regents fit to assume an entirely new role overnight. Greater freedom from European control was spelled out in the reversal of the relative positions of Assistant Resident and Regent—the former now officially becoming the Regent's "Younger Brother"—and in the increase in number of Residencies.[36] Even more important, the lowest rung in the European hierarchy, the *Controleur,* was abolished, thus breaking the chain of territorial Dutch control at the village level.[37] Potentially freed from the pressures of Dutch paternalism, the Regent simultaneously had to cross the threshold from ascriptive authoritarianism to quasi-democracy: between 1920 and 1926, the Regent, without ceasing to act as titular autocratic native head, had, in addition, to learn to become first servant of a largely elective assembly, the regency council (*regentschapsraad*). But as president of the council, he was *primus inter pares,* open to criticism from subordinates and commoners, duty-bound to carry out the majority decisions of his fellow councillors. Many of the council members were, moreover, doubtless better versed in the intricacies of parliamentary disputation than were the regents who, for the greater part, had been reared—and left—in relative isolation from modernity.

In actuality, the councils proved far less revolutionary than European and native officials had feared.[38] Staggered elections based on an extremely limited franchise,[39] combined with appointive members, resulted in relatively moderate assemblies in which lower officialdom predominated. This trend was furthered by the fact that from the early nineteen twenties on the majority of the most radical Indonesian nationalists, having chosen the path of "non-cooperation," boycotted the representative institutions born of decentralization.[40] But regardless of whether the winds of change blew less hard in fact than they might have threatened to do on paper, the regents almost instinctively turned to the European B. B. for guidance and protection of their prestige and position in a world suddenly rendered inexplicably threatening; appointive membership in the prestigious *Volksraad* was, for the same reasons, eagerly embraced as a counterweight to the loss of local authority.[41]

Clearly, decades of bureaucratic centralism could not suddenly be undone by re-

[36] Koenders, *loc. cit.,* 284.

[37] Bertsch, *loc. cit.,* 474.

[38] Writing in the early 1940's van Helsdingen (*loc. cit.,* 567) observed that "although there has been no lack of prophets of doom, for the time being at least they have not been proved right [since] the Councils do not, in fact, exert a dominant influence."

[39] Out of a total Indonesian population of over 10 million in West Java, 1.8 million were eligible to vote for a total of 23,776 electors in 18 regencies; the equivalent figures for Central Java, with over 10½ million native inhabitants, were 1.97 million and 25,154, resp.; for East Java with over 14 million, 2.5 million and 32,384, resp. *Visman Report,* I, 145.

[40] In the Bandung regency council, so its head reported in 1930, eighteen out of 23 elected members were government officials. R. A. A. Wiranatakoesoema, "De Regentschapsraad," in *25 Jaren Decentralisatie,* 190. He accounts for this state of affairs by stressing the force of tradition. Bousquet, *op. cit.,* 69, briefly alludes to a possible rigging of elections in favor of officials. But Wiranatakoesoema also specifically mentions that the radical nationalists of *Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia* and *Partai Nasional Indonesia* boycotted the Council while the "cooperating" *Pasundan* and *Budi Utomo* had most of their members in the city of Bandung which was not a constituency for the regency council. This essay contains some very interesting details on the problems besetting the regent's position vis-à-vis the council members.

[41] See Koesoemo Oetoyo, "De Volksraad en de inheemsche samenleving," *Koloniale Studiën,* XXII (1938), 336, and P. A. A. Djajadiningrat, "Herinneringen aan de geboorte en aan de eerste jaren van den Volksraad," *ibid.,* 365.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

forming good will alone. Political decentralization at the regency level virtually nullified administrative decentralization, the major result being increased uncertainty and a further blurring of the lines, but also, especially at the level of the village, loss of administrative efficiency. The sin of commission merely compounded decades' old sins of omission. The regents, left to atrophy as the remnants of a no longer viable past, and never given a clear opportunity to grow into properly-educated, viable segments of a modern administrative apparatus, were not so much the beneficiaries as the victims of the sudden deluge of reforms. Before long, diehard conservatives[42] no less than progressive liberals[43] came to regard decentralization as a brutal fiasco, particularly when the traumatic events of the mid-nineteen twenties revealed serious lacunae in the chain of administrative responsibility. Although the waves of unrest had certainly not been instigated or abetted by disloyal native civil servants, their very occurrence showed that the European *Beamtenstaat* had lost—or had been reformed into losing—its grip on an increasingly perturbed and volatile colonial society. In Java, it was clear, the *Inlands Bestuur* had floundered in uncertainty[44] while in West Sumatra, the corps, partly recruited in Java, but in any case often divorced from the traditional *adat*-chiefs, had proved too far removed from indigenous life and strife.[45] The onset of the depression, the worst economic disaster ever to hit colonial Indonesia, finally buried the Ethical era in Dutch colonial policy, or at least served as the rationalization to call a halt—barely allowed to creep into official pronouncements—to the reforming trend of the past two decades.[46]

What happened was not a sudden, visible reversal of administrative and political reforms, even though conservative voices in the Netherlands went as far as advocating the abolition of the *Volksraad*.[47] Indeed, the plans devised in the early twenties continued to be implemented in subsequent years, and especially those for Java did not overtly deviate from the original pattern. But within this seeming continuity, if not behind its institutional façade, changes of far-reaching importance were taking place, accompanied by a marked change of emphasis, whose sum total came pretty close to restoring the *Beamtenstaat* to much of its erstwhile preeminence.

The most apparent turning point came in 1931, by which time the basic pattern

---

[42] See Note 15, above. "The political wisdom of most Netherlanders [in the colony] may be briefly summed up in one sentence: Enough has already been 'spoiled' by all sorts of 'reform'; for God's sake, put an end to it and keep your hands off!" Ritman, *op. cit.*, 354. See also Koenders, *loc. cit.*, 269.

[43] Professor Cornelis van Vollenhoven, the leading proponent of "ethical" colonial policies at Leiden University, called the reforms in Java a "deplorable fiasco." Cited in D. W. N. de Boer, "Herstel van inheemsch bestel de kern der bestuurshervorming in de Buitengewesten," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift,* XXV (1936), 151.

[44] See the findings of the commission set up to inquire into the causes of the Communist-led revolt in West Java—the so-called Bantam Report—translated in Harry J. Benda and Ruth T. McVey (eds.), *The Communist Uprisings of 1926–27 in Indonesia: Key Documents,* esp. 34 and 56–57.

[45] For a detailed analysis of the administrative problems highlighted by the insurrection on the West Coast of Sumatra, see *Rapport van de commissie van onderzoek ingesteld bij het Gouvernementsbesluit van 13 Februari 1927, No. 1a* (Weltevreden, 1928), Vol. III, Part 1. For a highly critical comment on the report and especially on administrative reforms in the area, see P. de Roo de la Faille, *Het Sumatra's Westkust Rapport en de Adat* (The Hague, 1928); the author was a former B. B. officer and ex-member of the Council of the Indies.

[46] See *Visman Report,* I, 137. Fear that financial considerations would impair decentralization was expressed by the Adviser on Decentralization in 1930. A. B. Cohen-Stuart, "25 jaren Decentralisatie," in *25 Jaren Decentralisatie,* 23.

[47] Colijn, *op. cit.*, 88–93. Actually "Colijn . . . when he became minister again . . . never even alluded to the ideas he had professed in his book." B. H. M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: A History of the East Indian Archipelago* (Cambridge, Mass., 1943), 345.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

of decentralization in Java had been completed. The *Volksraad* had been given co-legislative powers in 1927, and a slight Indonesian majority two years later, and the establishment of the three Provinces (West, Central and East Java), together with the creation of the regencies as "autonomous" units, was finally completed in January, 1930.[48] Yet it is quite obvious that by that time reaction against the pattern of 1922 had reached its apex, European administrative officers—the "demi-gods"—having to all intents and purposes succeeded in urging a pause for stocktaking and re-orientation, if not for re-entrenchment.[49] Most indicative of their ascendancy was the least publicized change at the very center of the decentralization apparatus. Originally, the Decentralization Bureau had been attached to the Governor-General's cabinet at Buitenzorg (Bogor), thus functioning close to the colony's political executive, and, by implication, to the Ministry of Colonies; in the late nineteen twenties it was transferred to the Department of Interior Administration at Batavia (Djakarta) and thus became an adjunct of the *Binnenlands Bestuur* itself; a Government Commissioner, a B. B. official, was henceforth entrusted with the implementation of decentralization.[50] Decentralization had thus been removed from political interference in the Netherlands and "domesticated" in the citadel of the *Beamtenstaat.*

In 1931, recentralization commenced under the innocuous banner of "allocation of tasks" (*taakverdeeling*), actually a rather far-reaching redistribution of administrative functions and responsibilities, especially with regard to the *Inlands Bestuur.*[51] However limited and even problematical the Regents' position may have become as a result of *ontvoogding* and, especially, of the later reforms, it had affected that of their European colleagues, especially the Assistant Residents.[52] At the same time, the new system—barely operative as it was in the mid-nineteen twenties—had manifestly malfunctioned in times of political crisis, thus demonstrating, or so it was alleged, the dangers of breaking the clear lines of European responsibility for native affairs.[53] To repair the damage, the number of Residencies was brought back to the original seventeen, and within these larger units the *Controleur,* abolished so recently, was again given significant supervisory responsibilities, though he was not *de iure* restored to the territorial control of the lowest, village, units.[54] Again, while officially the Assistant Resident remained the Regent's "Younger Brother," his position was considerably strengthened, especially by giving him a fixed and in fact dominant position in the Regency Council and its steering body, the College of Commissioners (*College van Gecomitteerden*), which performed its day-to-day duties in between the annual sessions of the parent body. A similar strengthening of official

[48] The Province of West Java with its regencies came into existence on January 1, 1926, East Java on January 1, 1929, Central Java following suit on January 1, 1930. See Cohen-Stuart, *loc. cit.,* 21.

[49] The initiative of the European B. B. is specifically acknowledged by Koenders, *loc. cit.,* 285.

[50] Cohen-Stuart, *loc. cit.,* 23.

[51] See Bertsch, *loc. cit.,* 467 ff.

[52] See Koenders, *loc. cit.,* 284. The assistant resident had no formal place in the administrative structure of the regency (Bertsch, *loc. cit.,* 489). In the 1920's, the governor-general convened regents' conferences from which assistant residents were excluded. D. H. Burger, "Het Binnenlands Bestuur op Java en Madoera," in *Gedenkboek,* 93.

[53] The causal connection between the political events of the mid-1920's and "recentralization" is specifically alluded to by Koenders, *loc. cit.,* 257–58. Apprehension concerning the new trend as a result of political extremism was expressed by Cohen-Stuart (*loc. cit.,* 22–23) in 1930.

[54] See Coolhaas, *loc. cit.,* 67 and Koenders, *loc. cit.,* 285.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

guidance took place at the provincial level, where political controversy tended to be louder than in the more muted, official-dominated Regency Councils.[55]

The new trend became more conspicuous still when administrative reforms were finally introduced into the Outer Islands. These were originally planned to go into effect in 1932, but their implementation was postponed on account of the depression which, so the government announced, necessitated fiscal stringency. Yet it seems likely that, quite paradoxically, budgetary considerations before long turned into one prime reason for their subsequent speedy enactment and for the additional changes effected within the already established structure in Java.[56] The problem of fiscal responsibilities had been left undecided in the early reforms, and the theme of the financial burdens connected with the construction of corporate and conciliar bodies had never been muted. With the onset of the depression, it came to loom ever larger, but before long the government apparently felt that the new organs could now be invested with fiscal responsibilities for their expenditures, thus easing the strain on the exchequer and reducing the sizeable subsidies hitherto paid from the center.[57] The emphasis was, then, to shift from autonomous rights to duties of subordinate organs under stricter European supervision in the regions. As a contemporary commentator put it, "Auto-activity, autonomous accountability, and autonomous defraying of expenditures—this, briefly, is the government's intention."[58] By the beginning of 1939, the new budgetary arrangement—the so-called *landstreekbegrotingen* or regional budgets—was carried beyond Java to the Outer Islands.[59]

Decentralization plans for the Outer Islands were taken up again in 1934, a new Commissioner being appointed in the following year, and in 1936 decentralization in the Outer Islands (applying, be it noted, only to areas under direct Dutch administration, but not to those ruled by native potentates) found its way into the statute books.[60] It provided for the creation of three "governments" (*gouvernementen*) of Sumatra, Borneo and the Greater East, the latter comprising Celebes as well as the Lesser Sundas and the Moluccas. But these new entities were purely creatures of administrative efficiency, the "governors" being senior European B. B. officials (unlike the governor-general who was a Crown appointee). While in terms of administrative devolution the new "governments" could justifiably be termed a further step in decentralization, the slender political underpinning envisaged for them stood in marked contrast to the post-1922 reforms. For where administrative decentralization in Java had gone hand-in-hand with the birth of quasi-autonomous bodies coterminous with the new territorial subdivisions, the governments in the Outer Islands were to function as vast administrative realms in which individual ethnic groupings were to be progressively, but only very gradually, endowed with a measure of self-determination under strict control from the three island centers.

The colonial government's own plan—obviously inspired by the "demi-gods"—

[55] Cohen-Stuart, *loc. cit.*, 23.

[56] This is specifically stated in *Visman Report*, I, 137.

[57] See the analysis and statistics in *ibid.*, I, 151–56.

[58] Jansen, *op. cit.*, 88. For a criticism of this budgetary optimism, see E. J. Burger, "Het zelfbekostigingsbeginsel in de Buitengewestenbestuurshervorming," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, XXVIII (1939), 296–99.

[59] See F. van Maurik, "De verdere doorvoering der Bestuurshervorming in de Buitengewesten," *ibid.*, 282–95.

[60] *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1936, #68.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

actually called for administrative reform pure and simple, and it was only outside pressures that forced it to make room for slender political concessions. The original bill, providing only for the setting up of the new governments on January 1, 1937, was proclaimed by the governor general, only to be vetoed by the Dutch parliament which insisted on the simultaneous creation of at least some quasi-autonomous ethnic communities.[61] As a result, Government Commissioners were despatched to prepare the new governments and it was only in mid-1938 that these came into being, together with two autonomous communities, in the Minangkabau and in Bandjar.[62] A virtually unanimous *Volksraad* thereupon forced the government to adopt an additional, and potentially more far-reaching, measure, viz. the creation of provincial councils to be attached to each of the three "decentralized" units.[63] Where parliamentary pressure had in a sense forced the government to speed up its announced plans, *Volksraad* action had gone further in compelling it to deviate from its blueprint: in the light of earlier experiences in Java, so the government had argued, provincial councils would be premature and in view of ethnic heterogeneity problematical; nor could their creation be justified since almost half of the areas in the Outer Islands would, as indirectly-ruled territories, automatically be excluded from their purview.[64] As it was, however, the provincial councils never saw the light of day. They were to be convened by July 1, 1940, but by the time the German occupation of the Netherlands had shifted attention—and budgetary considerations—to defense, and the government felt justified in shelving their creation indefinitely.

Looked at closely, the new pattern of administrative reform in the Outer Islands reveals an almost complete break with the trend of the past quarter century in that it recreated a virtually full-fledged *Beamtenstaat* under the undisputed hegemony of the European B. B. When decentralization had begun, its main effort was the more or less rapid modernization—in fact even Westernization—of Indonesia. The official elucidation accompanying the administrative reform bill had *i. a.* stated that "the remnants of the earlier times which stand in the way of development would have to be removed. More specifically, an end would have to be made . . . to the continued existence of *adat* [customary, ethnic] communities."[65] The creation of the quasi-autonomous territorial subdivisions in Java, patterned on Dutch models, had clearly corresponded to this intention, as had the development of territorial administration in parts of the Outer Islands and, for that matter, the radical diminution of "self-governing territories" since 1914.

The new reforms were unmistakably moving in the opposite direction, the plan being to build henceforth from the bottom up rather than from the top down.[66] The principle of systematic territorial decentralization was implicitly abandoned in favor of a new form of indirect rule in which the ethnic group, styled the *groeps-*

[61] See Jansen, *op. cit.*, 107–08. For an angry reaction to the Dutch parliament's intervention, see Ch. Kiès, "De Bestuurshervorming in de Buitengewesten," *De Indische Gids*, 58 (1936), 879–82.

[62] For details on their composition, see "Kroniek," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, XXVIII (1939), 82–84. The *Volksraad* debate on these group communities is briefly reported in *ibid.*, XXVI (1937), 331–32. Another such community was to be created for Tapanuli, but the plan was not carried out.

[63] Jansen, *op. cit.*, 102–03. The vote was 45 for, 5 against (with 10 votes unaccounted for).

[64] See "Kroniek," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, XXVII (1938), 505–06.

[65] Cited Cohen-Stuart, *loc. cit.*, 20.

[66] This was the interpretation of the perceptive American scholar, Amry Vandenbosch, *The Dutch East Indies: Its Government, Problems and Politics* (University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 3rd. ed., 1944), 139.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

gemeenschap (group community) in the bill of 1936, was to become the main administrative unit, and also—in the original plan—the only quasi-autonomous corporate cell within the three overarching island governments. Instead of creating new entities for training in modern self-government, these were the most basic old units now clad in a spuriously new garb. And where the original reforms had sought to circumscribe officialdom's authority through conciliar bodies, the new reforms envisaged it as unhampered by such interference, a "brooding omnipresence" controlling, rather than guided by, traditional polities.[67] In clear divergence from the pattern in Java, where Regency Councils were at least nominally headed by natives, the *groepsgemeenschap* councils were presided over by Dutch Residents.

One of the most obvious victims in this reordering of colonial governance were the Western-trained Indonesian civil servants outside the ranks of the hereditary hierarchy in Java. Territorial administration in the Outer Islands had drawn on such native personnel, and even increasingly so in the early years of the depression when budgetary stringency dictated a reduction in the recruitment of the far more expensive European candidates. But the slender hopes for even the most gradual Indonesianization of the European *Binnenlands Bestuur* that these developments may have engendered soon proved out of place in the new order of things. As the government's spokesman in the *Volksraad* bluntly declared, in this new order the Dutch-trained native official was doomed to disappear altogether, ceding his place to the traditional *adat*-head. Since ethnicity and not territoriality formed the basis of the "new look," the government, so he added, no longer wished to inject "alien" Indonesians, notably Javanese, into the structure of Outer Island administration.[68] That that structure was to be, and remain, Dutch became equally clear when an Indonesian *Volksraad*-member in 1938 requested that the higher B. B. ranks be opened up to qualified natives, only to be told that it was essential to reserve these posts to a leadership "which, according to tradition and origin, can guarantee that these lands will continue to be governed in accordance with Dutch principles."[69] In conformity with these views, recruitment of European personnel was brought back to its pre-depression level. It is hardly an accident that it was a prominent Western-educated Indonesian B. B. officer who in 1936 launched the ill-fated petition in the *Volksraad* which called upon the metropolitan government to place the future evolution of colonial development on the agenda of an Imperial conference.[70] Only such an appeal, bypassing as it were an Indies' government firmly attached to and allied with the European B. B., might have held out promise for a stemming of the tide.

That modernization had ceased to be the operational motto of the post-1931 era was well demonstrated by the new respect paid to the age-old Dutch principle of

[67] Jansen, *op. cit.*, 96–97. The same author bluntly described the new reforms as "a welcome reconstitution of the erstwhile central position of the B. B." (*ibid.*, 101). See also J. J. Schrieke, "Indië en dominion-status," *Koloniale Studiën,* XX (1936), 39.

[68] "If we fully understand . . . the essence of *ontvoogding,* then the native administrative corps can only find a place within that policy in the measure that it must gradually see its tasks transferred to the traditional [adat] heads of the people." Cited in H. van der Wal, "De ontvoogding in den Volksraad," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift,* XXVII (1938), 698. Cf. also de Boer, *op. cit.,* 156.

[69] Van der Wal, 699–700.

[70] For a recent discussion, see Jan M. Pluvier, "The Soetardjo Petition," *Journal of the Historical Society,* (University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur) II (1963/64), 51–65.

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

indirect rule. No longer were "self-governing" territories to be considered objectionably "feudal" anachronisms destined for progressive extinction. A halt was called to the earlier policy of abolition and/or merger, and from the mid-nineteen thirties on certain formerly self-governing areas, mainly in Celebes and Bali, were even reconstituted.[71] Not surprisingly, a contemporary Dutch observer stated that the *zelfbesturen* might, in the new view, be regarded as "free forms of decentralization."[72] A further approximation between the two kinds of "indirect rule" occurred with the constitution of a small, purely advisory body in the Surakarta domain of the *Susuhunan,* the most venerable of the four Javanese principalities in the former realm of Mataram.

There can, then, be little doubt that on the eve of the Second World War the foundations of a reinvigorated *Beamtenstaat,* a colonial polity proper, had been firmly reestablished in the Netherlands Indies.[73] Obviously, the clock had not been entirely turned back—witness the vigorous though limited role of the *Volksraad* in the closing years of Dutch rule—nor can it be denied that under the new dispensation the door had been left ajar for the slow evolution of colonial life. But it is equally undeniable that that evolution was henceforth to be charted far more cautiously and under far stricter central guidance. If in 1918 autonomy had appeared to many in the colony to be just around the corner, two decades later it had receded into a barely perceivable future—three hundred years being the guarded guess which the governor-general permitted himself in 1936.[74] Doubtless the early reforms had been hastily if not over-optimistically conceived, and the hopes for the rapid Westernization of an as yet slowly and quite unevenly evolving Indonesian society were perhaps bound to run aground. Nor can we deny the fact that the nascent Indonesian political leadership ignored the proffered hand. Whether inspired by revolutionary dreams or influenced by the fairly successful "non-cooperation" policies of their British Indian counterparts, most of them for long eschewed work within the institutional framework prepared by the colonial government.[75] When at long last some groupings decided to abandon this hopeless stance of spiteful opposition after 1936, the moment for true cooperation had long since passed. By then the new pattern had become firmly enough established to permit the government—let alone the *colons*—to ignore belated nationalist willingness to seek devolution and autonomy along constitutional paths.

Granting all this, and granting even that the new direction, with its emphasis on carefully guided evolution of the diverse ethnic *adat* communities—especially in the

---

[71] *Visman Report,* I, 130.

[72] Van Helsdingen, *loc. cit.,* 469.

[73] The Adviser for Decentralization acutely observed in 1930 that, in response to the early extremism of the national movement, the European community had turned to the safeguarding of its own political and economic interests. The resultant clash had brought the government to the fore as the sole "balance-creating and regulating force." Cohen-Stuart, *loc. cit.,* 20, He continued by commenting on the "accentuated [tendency] to strengthen the guiding power of the administrative authorities." (*ibid.,* 23). See also Note 10, above.

[74] See Note 8, above.

[75] This interpretation is stressed by Koenders, *loc. cit.,* 257–58: ". . . [A]fter 1927, the ethical policy primarily lost its cause since the overwhelming majority of Indonesian politicians turned against the Netherlanders. . . . The aim for rapid constitutional reforms of the ethically-minded Netherlanders had run aground."

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

islands beyond Java, where many of them still remained more or less intact—was by no means devoid of intrinsic merit,[76] it is hard to escape the conclusion that not only the immediate but very likely also the long-range beneficiaries of the post-1931 "settlement" would have been the Dutch, and more especially Dutch officialdom, rather than the Indonesians. The reluctant experiment in liberalizing the colonial polity had, it would seem, been abandoned too quickly if not too eagerly, its failures judged more harshly than the brevity of the experiment may have warranted. Having weathered the political storms of the 1920's, the *Beamtenstaat* was surely in no mortal danger; if its doors had to remain resolutely closed to radical but powerless politico's bent on destroying the colonial relationship, did it have to be shut to the Western-trained Indonesian, especially the official?[77] Was there any justification for leaving the regents of Java, after decades of confusion and reform, without proper, modern training that might have transformed them in time into a truly efficient corps?[78] And, whatever its viability, could the Outer Island *adat* group community, left in ethnic isolation under European control, ever be expected to grow into an adequate training ground for the skills of modern governance? Why, then, the governmental reluctance to provide at least a regional or provincial meeting place for their representatives?

Be that as it may, the *Beamtenstaat* had triumphed in a Netherlands Indies that was far more Netherlands than were India and Burma British or the Philippines American when the soldiers of the Rising Sun at one stroke destroyed the handiwork of European colonialism in Southeast Asia. Not so much destroyed as interrupted, perhaps. It briefly revived during the still-born attempt to fashion a quasi-federal Indonesia under Dutch aegis patently harking back to the pattern of "centralized indirect rule" developed since 1931.[79] Indeed it may even have survived the severance of all ties between motherland and colony,[80] bequeathing to the In-

[76] The reorientation of colonial policy in part at least paralleled legal reforms inspired by Professor C. van Vollenhoven at Leiden and his followers. They opposed the Westernization of Indonesia on Dutch models and urged, instead, that modernization be based upon the reality of viable native *adat* institutions and practices. Though van Vollenhoven was politically a liberal, it seems likely that his emphasis on the *adat* community provided a welcome underpinning for the administrative reforms in the Outer Islands of the 1930's. I have suggested this hypothesis in my *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation, 1942–1945* (The Hague and Bandung, 1958), 66–68. In his foreword to the book (*ibid.*, ix), Professor W. F. Wertheim has recorded his reservations concerning this hypothesis. See also Van Niel, *op. cit.*, 243–51, for a similar interpretation. The legal problems were authoritatively discussed in two articles—separated by over a decade—by B. ter Haar: "Een keerpunt in de adatrechtpolitiek: Toekomstbeschouwingen," *Koloniale Studiën*, XII (1928), 245–80, and "Halverwege de nieuwe adatrechtspraak," *ibid.*, XXIII (1939), 113–41.

[77] "The government," some Indonesian spokesmen pleaded before the Visman Commission, "should place more confidence in the Indonesian intellectuals. Even granting that the choice may be limited, the government should take some risks and see things going less well according to Dutch standards. What might be lost in quality would be gained in appreciation and confidence." *Visman Report*, II, 23.

[78] A plea to admit regents to the Batavia Law School, thus equipping them at long last with a proper, modern education, can be found in two articles by H. G. Heyting: "Positie en opleiding van regenten," *De Indische Gids*, 60 (1938), 509–16, and "Herbewapening van regenten, moreel en sociaal," *ibid.*, 61 (1939), 403–07. Some regents and other native administrative personnel were trained in a separate institute, the *Bestuursschool*, founded in 1914 and subsequently re-named *Bestuursacademie;* closed during the depression, the "academy" was reopened in 1938 with only fifteen candidates. See "Kroniek," *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, XXVIII (1939), 85–87. Providing native officials with a thorough Western education had been Snouck Hurgronje's oft-repeated demand; see Note 32, above.

[79] See Kahin, *op. cit.*, 351–90, *passim*. See also A. Arthur Schiller, *The Formation of Federal Indonesia, 1945–1949* (The Hague and Bandung, 1955).

[80] It could even be argued that the precolonial Javanese polity already was a highly developed patri-

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

donesian Republic an administrative structure that has proved resilient enough to reemerge—not, for sure, without important modifications—from political explosions that dwarfed the timid first stirrings of three decades ago.[81]

---

monial *Beamtenstaat* in its own right, which was further developed by the meticulously bureaucratic regime of the Netherlands Indies, reaching an old-new, Dutch-Javanese synthesis in independent Indonesia. This kind of continuity refers to style of governance rather than to structural similarities. See W. F. Wertheim, *East-West Parallels: Sociological Approaches to Modern Asia* (The Hague, 1964), 106 ff.

[81] The many-faceted administrative and political problems of decentralization and recentralization in the history of the Indonesian Republic can be studied in J. D. Legge, *Central Authority and Regional Autonomy in Indonesia, 1950–1960* (Ithaca, 1961) and Gerald Maryanov, *Decentralization in Indonesia as a Political Problem* (Ithaca, 1958).

This content downloaded from 152.14.136.96 on Wed, 14 Aug 2013 02:56:33 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions